



Co-Chair Senator Elizabeth Steiner  
Co-Chair Representative Tawna Sanchez  
Co-Vice Chair Senator Fred Girod  
Co-Vice Chair Representative David Gomberg  
Co-Vice Chair Representative Greg Smith  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
900 Court St. NE Salem, OR 97301

May 3, 2023

Re: Central Oregon Wildfire Workforce Partnership is in **support** of House Bill 5025 – Higher Education Coordinating Commission – Workforce Investment Related Programs and Funding

Co-Chair Senator Elizabeth Steiner, Co-Chair Representative Tawna Sanchez, and Members of the Committee,

The Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC) and Heart of Oregon Corps partnered to form the Central Oregon Wildfire Workforce Partnership (COWWP) under the 2021 Oregon Conservation Corps funding opportunity/SB 762.

Youth crews conduct fuels reduction work on private and public property within Jefferson, Deschutes, and Crook Counties. This work is free of charge for property owners and is prioritized for underserved and low-income communities and ranges from thinning, chipping, and ladder fuels reduction in natural areas to create defensible spaces and homes, neighborhoods, and critical infrastructure.

Through the COWWP projects, youth gain on-the-job training, certifications, and knowledge in fire fuels reduction practices. Youth in the program receive wages, scholarships, and additional workforce training in both soft and hard skills to prepare them to enter the professional workforce.

On behalf of the COIC, Heart of Oregon Corps, and supporting partners, we are in support of continuing the work of the Central Oregon Wildfire Workforce Partnership. We strongly urge the Policy Option Package 301 request which includes \$10 million for the Oregon Conservation Corps and \$2 million dedicated to Tribal Youth Corps funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,

*Lauren Street*

Lauren Street, Forest Fuels Project Planner

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